DOCTRINE OF THE PRIESTHOOD

Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven. (D&C 121:45)

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PRIESTHOOD AND THE LAW OF SUCCESSION

PART 1
A SECRET PRIESTHOOD

PART 2
THE RESTORATION OF THE HIGHER ORDER AND FULNESS OF THE PATRIARCHAL PRIESTHOOD

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Introduction

Over the years a tremendous amount of material has been written on the subject of Succession in the Priesthood and the crisis which occured shortly after the Prophet's death between President Rigdon and the quorum of the Twelve. For the most part, these have been written from the perspective of the different claimants, ranging from the lineal claims which were made by the Prophet's children, to those of the Apostleship and the quorum of the Twelve. The great weakness or flaw in these writings has been that they have universally resorted to the Prophet's Kirtland Revelations on Priesthood as the foundation for understanding the succession issues as they existed at the time of the Prophet's death. In doing this they have neglected to take into account the restoration of the Higher Order and Fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood which took place on April 3rd, 1836. The natural consequences of this oversight is that they have failed to recognize the significance of the Fulness of the Priesthood as well as that of the Priesthood organizations which grew out of it — namely the Holy Order and Council of Fifty. This then is the focus of this issue, to lay the essential foundation for understanding the Priesthood restoration which took place on April 3rd, 1836, when Moses, Elias and Elijah appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith in the Kirtland Temple.

Part 1

A Secret Priesthood

by

Fred C. Collier

1978

After the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith controversy began to rage over the Law of Succession. First there was Sidney Rigdon, then William Smith, then James Strang, and finally even Joseph's children claimed the right of succession.

Many have written on this matter, but none have *yet* dealt with the real issues, because they themselves *have not* understood them. Understanding the succession problems of 1844 requires a knowledge of the *further* developments in priesthood doctrine and organization which the Prophet Joseph Smith made after the Kirtland Temple restoration on April 3rd, 1836 (D&C 110).

Those who have written on succession have generally gone back to the revelation on priesthood given in 1835 (D&C 107) using it as a frame of reference to resolve the problem. In doing so they

have completely negated (in their writings) the priesthood developments which the Prophet made *during the Nauvoo period*; hints of which were intimated in the revelation he received on January 19, 1841 (D&C 124).

These later developments on priesthood have been misunderstood because most of them took place in *"Private Councils"*, the records and teachings of which were not made public. This left the general membership of the Church in the dark and they did not understand what the Prophet was about when he began to institute changes in Church hierarchy. In their ignorance they objected, which drew the following statement from the Prophet:

> It has gone abroad that I proclaimed myself no longer a prophet. I said it last Sabbath ironically: I supposed you would all understand. . . . . I only said it to try your faith; and it is strange, brethren, that you have been in the Church so long, *and not yet understand* the Melchisedek Priesthood. (*HC* 5:516-518)

From what the Prophet Joseph said on another occasion it is little wonder that the general membership of the Church did "not yet understand the Melchizedek Priesthood":

> There are many things which belong to the powers of the Priesthood **and the keys thereof**, *that have been kept hid* from before the foundation of the world; they are hid from the wise and prudent to be revealed in the last times.(*HC* 4:209-10)

Again we find Brigham Young (who was privy to Joseph's doings in his private councils) making similar statements. During the excommunication trial of Sidney Rigdon he stated the following:

> Brother Marks says, if there are any ordained to offices equal with Elder Rigdon he don't know it. He don't know all the ordinations, nor he won't **till he knows something more than the written word**. . . . . .
>
> As to a person not knowing more than the written word, let me tell you that *there are keys* that the written word **never spoke of**, *nor never will*. (*T&S* 5:666, 667)

While in the heat of the battle over succession with Sidney Rigdon, Brigham also made another statement which was not unlike the above:

> Who knows anything of the priesthood, or of the organization of the *kingdom of God*. I am plain. (*HC* 7:234)

This remark elicited the following statement by B.H. Roberts, who apparently, was also in the dark with regard to these things:

> It is rather singular that in the remarks of President Young and by none of the leading elders who spoke on that eventful 8th of August, 1844, *that no adequate unfolding of the relationship of the respective presiding councils of the church was given*. In the above I follow the punctuation as it stands in the records of the church, that is, as will be seen, the sentence, "Who knows anything of the priesthood, or of the organization of the kingdom of God", ends with a period. I wonder if the speaker's intent was not to make of it a question (?) *For so far as the speeches are concerned there really was no adequate relationship of presiding councils of the priesthood given*. It is quite possible that they had not been studied by the elders from the viewpoint of the relationship of these respective councils. (*HC* 7:234 footnote)

B. H. Roberts goes on in his footnote (as generally have all others) to expound from the revelation on priesthood given in 1835 what would *"Logically"* be the law of succession in 1844. He does not realize that the reason neither "President Young" nor any of "The leading elders" elucidate from that revelation during the succession crisis is because *there was nothing in that revelation that clearly explained the Higher Priesthood or its organizations* **which Joseph had established in Nauvoo**.

As far as Church organization is concerned, the revelation on Priesthood (D&C 107) only dealt with that Priesthood and Keys which had been restored up to the time it was given on March 28th, 1835. This included the Aaronic Priesthood which was restored by John the Baptist (D&C 13) and the Apostolic Priesthood which was restored by Peter, James and John (D&C 27:12). *But it did not take into account* **the Higher Priesthood restoration which took place a year later** on April 3rd, 1836 (D&C 110), nor the Higher Priesthood organizations and offices which grew out of it. And it was *that Priesthood* and *those Keys* which became the issue of the succession crisis of 1844, and not the Keys restored by Peter, James and John.

In an editorial which was written by John Taylor and printed in the *Times and Seasons* on December 15, 1844, there appeared an article entitled "Keys":

"Keys"

This may be thought by some to be rather a singular caption for a religious article, but when duly considered, it is presumed, that persons of candor will reflect upon it as an expression, or as a term, when used in the revelations of God, conveying the meaning of *power*, *authority*, *and knowledge*: The symbolical meaning of the word "key" or "keys" pertaining to the priesthood of the Son of God, **cannot**, *or will not be fully defined to the present generation*, because the world is unworthy of the information. . . . . at any rate, *power, authority, knowledge, and the assurance of eternal life,* seem to be locked or unlocked by these "keys" (*T&S* 5:748)

In order to understand the priesthood developments which took place after the Kirtland Temple restoration it is necessary to become acquainted with the *organizations* through which this priesthood functioned, as well as *its laws, doctrines and ordinances*. The power and authority of any and every Priesthood has and ever will be manifested through the nature of its organization and the rites and ordinances which rightly can be carried out under its authority.

It is *falsely* assumed by many that the priesthood should be considered as separate and apart from organization. The Priesthood is the *outgrowth derived from the organization of the Government of God*. President Brigham Young stated the following:

I recollect once when I was preaching, a question was asked me: "*What is Priesthood*?" The answer was ready, and perfectly simple in its nature, plain to be understood, and is couched in a short sentence (viz.) *Priesthood is a perfect system of Government that rules and reigns in Eternity*.

A question at once arises in the mind: "*Where is eternity*?" The answer is at hand: *Eternity* is here: — we are in eternity just as much so as any other beings in Heaven or on Earth. Heavenly beings are no more in Eternity than we are. We are in the midst of Eternity; and when we become acquainted with the system of Government and the laws that rule in Eternity, we shall then know it calculated to endure; to govern and control *all things* which are in heaven, *and on the earth*.

The Eternal Priesthood of God — the Government of God — the Laws of Eternity, **is a pure and perfect system of government!** (*TPBY* 230–231)

The *Key* to *The Law of Succession in the Priesthood* is found in a basic understanding of the nature of this *"perfect system of government."* Parley P. Pratt made the following statement:

> **The Order of God's government**, **both in time and in eternity**, **is Patriarchal**: that is — it is a fatherly government. Each father who is raised from the dead and made a partaker of the Celestial glory in its fulness, will hold lawful jurisdiction over his own children, and over all the families which spring of them to all generations, forever and ever. (*Millennial Star* 5:189)

It is through the priesthood that the *will* and the *Law* of God is manifested to man on the earth, and through which it is carried out. The Church of Christ belongs to the priesthood of the Son of God (*HC* 7:213), and is the organization through which that priesthood accomplishes its mission to the world. The Church *when separated from the priesthood* becomes a hollow Church, *devoid of the power of salvation*. In short it ceases to be the Church of Christ *regardless* of the name by which it may be called.

True it is possible for the Priesthood to exist independent of the Church, but it is not possible for the Church to exist independent of the Priesthood, as the Priesthood is its source of authority. However all the offices which grow out of the Priesthood of the Son of God (that which was restored by Peter, James and John) can be and are found within the confines of Christ's Church whenever it is completely organized. The Church of Christ was organized by the authority of the Priesthood which was restored by John the Baptist and Peter, James and John, and it is through those Priesthoods that all the offices within Christ's Church derive their authority.

The revelation on priesthood given in 1835 is as a blossoming rose, manifesting the growth and development of the Priesthood of the Son of God, with all its various offices which filled the Church. However it only took into account that priesthood which had been restored up to that time. There were still higher orders of the priesthood y*et to be restored* to which naturally belong *other organizations and offices* that did not rightly belong within the confines of the organization of the Church of Christ.

Even though this Higher Priesthood pertained to offices which were separate and apart from the Church of Christ, still the restoration of this priesthood d*id affect* the relationships which existed between some of the officers within that Church. This was the case for example between the Church Patriarch and the President of the Church (see D&C 124:124-125).

It is revealing to note the contrast in the Prophet's statements regarding priesthood and church organization which he made before and after the restoration of the *Higher Priesthood*. On the 29th of March 1836, only five days prior to the restoration of the Higher Priesthood, Joseph made the following statement:

> I then observed to the quorums, that I had now completed the organization of the Church, and we had passed through all the necessary ceremonies (*HC* 2:432)

Notwithstanding this, nearly six years later, on the 28th of April the Prophet stated "that he calculates to organize the Church *in its proper order* **as soon as the Temple is completed**." (*HC* 4:604) The contrast between these two statements is the result of the restoration of the Higher Priesthood.

It is only natural to understand that if the highest priesthood that existed upon the earth was the office of a priest in the Aaronic priesthood, then as far as the kingdom of God on the earth is concerned the man who presided in that priesthood would be God's head prophet to the world. Likewise should the Apostolic Priesthood be bestowed upon another man on the earth and he preside therein as President of that priesthood, then that man who had been God's head Prophet to the world by virtue of being the President of the Aaronic priesthood would be amenable to the President of the Melchizedek Priesthood as far as the Kingdom of God is concerned and would be subject to him *according to the Law*. He would no longer be God's head Prophet on Earth. This is the case with the Prophet Joseph Smith, however instead of there being two different prophets there was only one and instead of there being two priesthood restorations there were *three*.

When the Prophet Joseph received this *third restoration of priesthood*, by virtue of that authority *he organized another Church*. I do

not here refer to "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" as opposed to "The Church of Latter-day Saints" or "The Church of Latter-day Saints" as contrasted to "The Church of Christ." I mean a different Church which went by an altogether *different name*, and which was organized by the priesthood authority that was restored in the Kirtland Temple, rather than the Apostolic priesthood. Heber C. Kimball spoke of this organization as follows:

> This people here are the people of God. Here, in the Territory of Deseret, is the **Kingdom of God**, and here are all the *officers pertaining to that kingdom*; and here is an *organization* that is *organized* **after the order of God**, and it is organized after the order of the **Church of the First Born**.
>
> Let me explain what the **Church of the First Born** is. It is the first Church that ever was raised up upon this earth; that is, the first born Church. That is what I mean; and *when* **God our Father organized that Church**, *He organized it just as* **His Father** *organized the Church on the earth* **where He dwelt**; *and that same order is organized here in the City of Great Salt Lake*; and it is that order that Joseph Smith the Prophet of God **organized in the beginning in Kirtland, Ohio**. Brother Brigham Young, myself, and others *were present when that was done*; and when those **officers** received their **endowments**, they were together in one place. *They were organized*, and received their endowments and blessings, *and* **those keys** *were placed upon them, and that* **kingdom** will stand forever.
>
> *Now mark it — that* **kingdom** *will never be overthrown*; although they may kill, *that is, if they can*, brother Brigham and me, and brother Daniel H. Wells, *and they may kill the apostles*, if they can, and so they may keep on from this time to all eternity, and they never can obliterate this work. I know it. They may kill, and destroy, and waste a great many *limbs* that are upon this Church; but let me tell you, they never can kill the tree nor destroy the root from whence we have sprung; for our Father and our God is that root, and Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the tree or vine, **and we spring out of that vine** (*JD* 5:129-130)

It will be noted that Heber C. Kimball said that the Church of the Firstborn was organized in Kirtland, Ohio rather than Fayette, New York, and that Brigham and Heber were present when that was done. It should also be remembered, that Heber C. Kimball and Brigham Young *were not* among the six members of the Church which were present on April 6th, 1830 when "The Church of Christ"

was organized. This being the case it precludes the possibility that he might have been speaking about the Church of Christ under another name.

Notice carefully what Heber C. Kimball said regarding the *"Keys"* of *The Church of the Firstborn*:

When those officers received their endowments, they were together in one place. They were **organized**, and received their endowments and blessings, **and those keys** were placed upon them, and that **Kingdom** will stand forever.

It is "**Those Keys**" pertaining to "**The Church of the Firstborn**" that became the issue of the succession crisis in 1844; and to which Heber C. Kimball referred, when during the excommunication trial of Sidney Rigdon, he said:

Elder Rigdon after he came from Pittsburgh never attended council only when he could not avoid it. He has no authority only what he receives from the church. . . . *He was not in the* **council pertaining to the High Priesthood** *until just before he started for Pittsburgh*. Brother Phelps was the means of bringing him in, but he has not got the same authority as others; *there are more than thirty men who have got* **higher authority** *than he has* . . . . **There are men here brethren who have got authority**, *but we don't want to mention their names*, **for the enemy will try to kill them**. (*Times & Seasons* 5:663; See also *Doctrine of the Priesthood* Vol. 7, No. 12, Dec. 1990)

PART 2

THE RESTORATION OF THE HIGHER ORDER AND FULNESS OF THE PATRIARCHAL PRIESTHOOD

by

FRED C. COLLIER

1978

On the 3rd of April 1836, Jesus Christ appeared in the Kirtland Temple to the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. Following this visitation the Prophet further records:

After this vision closed, the heavens were again opened unto us; and Moses appeared before us, and committed unto us *the keys of the gathering of Israel* from the four parts of the earth, and *the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north.* After this, Elias appeared, and committed *the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham*, saying that *in us and our seed all generations after us should be blessed.* After this vision had closed, another great and glorious vision burst upon us; for Elijah the prophet, who was taken to heaven without tasting death, stood before us, and said: Behold, the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi — testifying that he [Elijah] should be sent, before the great and dreadful

day of the Lord come — *To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse* — Therefore, the keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands; and by this ye may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors. (D&C 110:11–16)

WHAT MOSES RESTORED

Some have seen contradiction in the fact that the Church commenced gathering the dispersed of Israel almost at its inception in 1830, when in fact, according to its own history, the "Keys to the gathering of Israel" were not restored until six years later, in April of 1836. It almost seems as though the Church had run before it was sent.

Understanding the answer to this question requires a knowledge of Prophecy as it relates to this dispensation and the Gathering of Israel. In accordance with prophecy this dispensation is to be separated into two basic eras — the first of which is designated in scripture as "the Times of the Gentiles" and the second is referred to as "the Times of Israel". All this and more is clearly foretold in the Old and New Testament, as well as in the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants. The following passage from the Doctrine and Covenants serves well to illustrate this fact:

Wherefore, hearken and I [Christ] will reason with you, and I will speak unto you and prophesy, as unto men in days of old. And I will show it plainly as I showed it unto my disciples as I stood before them in the flesh, and spake unto them, saying: . . . I will show unto you how the *day of redemption* shall come, and also the ***restoration of the scattered Israel***. And now ye behold this temple which is in Jerusalem [i.e. the Temple of Solomon], which ye call the house of God, and your enemies say that this house shall never fall. But, verily I say unto you, that desolation shall come upon this generation as a thief in the night, and this people shall be destroyed and ***scattered among all nations***.

And this Temple which ye now see shall be thrown down that there shall not be left one stone upon another. And it shall come to pass, that this generation of Jews shall not pass away until every desolation which I have told you concerning them shall come to pass. . . . And this I have told you

concerning Jerusalem; and *when that day shall come, shall a remnant be scattered among all nations; But they shall be gathered again; but they shall remain [scattered]* ***until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled***. . . . . And ***when the times of the Gentiles is come in*** [i.e. 1830], *a light shall break forth among them that sit in darkness*, and it shall be ***the fulness of my gospel***; ***But they receive it not***; for they perceive not the light, and they turn their hearts from me because of the precepts of men. And *in that generation* ***shall the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled***. (D&C 45:15–21, 24–25, 28–30)

It was this gathering of Israel, which would take place ***after*** *"the Times of the Gentiles" had been* ***fulfilled***, to which the keys that Moses restored pertained. Not only did Moses commit "The Keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the Earth", but also the Keys of *"The leading of the ten tribes* ***from the land of the north****"*, which is yet to be accomplished. It is appropriate too, that Moses would be the one to restore these keys, for he was the Prophet who first gathered Israel out of Egypt and led them to the threshold of the promised land.

All this is in contrast to the gathering which the Church commenced at the beginning of this dispensation in 1830. It was at this period that "the Times of the Gentiles" was ushered in. "The light which broke forth among those that sat in darkness", which is referred to in the above passage, was "the Fulness of the Gospel" that was restored through the instrumentality of the Prophet Joseph Smith. It would not be until *after the Gentiles had been given their chance*, and after the ***believing Gentiles*** had rejected the ***Fulness of the Father's Gospel*** that "the times of the Gentiles" would be ***fulfilled***, and "the times of Israel" *be come in* (3 Nephi 16:10–15; Rom 11). Again it would be at this time that the Keys which Moses restored would be implemented, as they had more particularly to do with the "Times of Israel". In other words they pertained to a gathering which would take place under the Patriarchal Era of the House of Israel. Thus, while it is true that the Church had been congregating the dispersed of Israel for years before 1836, this in itself does not constitute contradiction, for there is a great difference between gathering into a Gentile Church (D&C 109:60) and the gathering which pertains to the Keys that Moses restored in the

Kirtland Temple, which had to do with the restoration of the House and Kingdom of Israel. The gathering which the Church commenced prior to 1836 was not patriarchal in nature. Instead, it was done in a Gentile capacity, during the "Times of the Gentiles". That is, they were not organized into a Patriarchal Kingdom, but instead were gathered into non-family units such as branches and stakes. In other words, they were the blood of Israel, but they were not yet established as the House of Israel; for they were still identified with the Gentiles (D&C 109:60) which came out of the European nations and with whom Ephraim mixed and intermarried when they lost their identity.

THE RESTORATION OF ELIAS

Immediately following the restoration of the "Keys of the Gathering of Israel" by Moses, the Prophet further records that an angel by the name of "Elias" appeared and committed to them the Dispensation of the Gospel of Abraham:

> After this, Elias appeared, and committed the Dispensation of the Gospel of Abraham, saying that in us and our seed all generations after us should be blessed. (D&C 110:12)

Who was Elias?

One might ask, who was this angel "Elias" that appeared in the Kirtland Temple? It would seem that of necessity it would be someone who held presiding authority during Abraham's dispensation, for the keys which he restored pertained to "The Dispensation of the Gospel of Abraham". In a revelation given to Joseph Smith it is indicated that this "Elias" was the same angel who visited Zacharias (the father of John the Baptist) in the New Testament:

> And also with Elias, *to whom I have committed the keys of bringing to pass the restoration of all things* spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began, concerning the last days; and also John [i.e. John the Baptist] the son of Zacharias, *which Zacharias he (Elias) visited* and gave promise that he should have a son, and his name should be John, and he should be filled with the spirit of Elias (D&C 27:6–7)

The book of Luke identifies this Elias who appeared to Zacharias as the angel Gabriel:

There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years. And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course . . . . . there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. . . . . and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. . . . And the angel . . . said unto him, *I am Gabriel*, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings. (Luke 1:5–19)

The scripture goes on to say that Elisabeth, the wife of Zacharias conceived:

And in the sixth month [of Elisabeth's Pregnancy] *the angel Gabriel* was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. . . . And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. (Luke 1:26–28, 30–31)

So it was the Angel Gabriel who visited Zacharias to announce the birth of John the Baptist; and it was Gabriel who visited the Virgin Mary to announce the coming of the Son of God into the world. Again it was this same angel "Gabriel" who appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery as "Elias" in the Kirtland Temple and who committed to them "the Gospel of the Dispensation of

Abraham". And according to the Prophet Joseph Smith the angel Gabriel is the Patriarch Noah:

> Then to Noah, who is Gabriel; he stands next in authority to Adam in the Priesthood; he was called of God to this office, and was the father of all living in his day, and to him was given the dominion (*HC* 3:386)

The Prophet once mentioned a restoration of Priesthood keys by Gabriel or Noah, however he did not specify the occasion when it took place:

> the voice of Michael, the archangel; the voice of Gabriel, and of Raphael, and of diverse angels, from Michael or Adam down to the present time, all declaring their dispensation, their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the power of their priesthood (D&C 128:21)

It is very fitting that Noah should restore the Gospel of the Dispensation of Abraham for he instituted it and lived during Abraham's day. President John Taylor in speaking of the dispensation of Abraham stated that "it was under the dispensation that was introduced . . . by Noah" (*JD* 21:246).

Joseph Smith spoke of the relationship of Abraham's dispensation with Noah's in The 2nd Lecture on Faith (see *UPR* 2:45–52, p. 21–24). There is some discrepancy in the scriptures as to whether Abraham was 58 years old when Noah died or whether Noah died 2 years before Abraham's birth. However this may be, beyond all question Abraham lived most (if not all) of his life under the Patriarchal reign of Shem, who was also called Melchizedek. And, according to the Book of Mormon, Melchizedek "did reign under his father" (Alma 13:18) who was Noah. It is therefore appropriate that Noah would be the individual to restore the keys of the dispensation which he himself established.

Other Prophets Named Elias

Noah is not the only prophet or angel to which Joseph Smith attached the name "Elias". In one of his discourses the Prophet explains that "Elias" is a title for a forerunner, whose mission is to prepare for something greater yet to come. John the Baptist is therefore

referred to as an "Elias" whose calling was to prepare the way for the greater mission of Christ (*TPJS* 335). In another revelation John the Revelator was also designated as an "Elias", who would come and restore all things:

> Question. What are we to understand by the little book which was eaten by John, as mentioned in the 10th chapter of Revelation? Answer. We are to understand that it was a mission, and an ordinance, for him to gather the tribes of Israel; behold, this is Elias, who, as it is written, must come and restore all things. (D&C 77:14)

At a conference of the Church in June 1831, Joseph prophesied that John the Revelator was then among the ten lost tribes of Israel preparing them for their return:

> The Spirit of the Lord fell upon Joseph in an unusual manner, and he prophesied that John the Revelator was then among the Ten Tribes of Israel who had been led away by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, to prepare them for their return from their long dispersion, to again possess the land of their fathers (*History of the Church* 1:176).

As will be seen this mission which John the Revelator received to gather the lost tribes of Israel, has more in common with the "gathering keys" which Moses restored than those which "Elias" restored in the Kirtland Temple. John the Revelator's mission was more involved than just the restoring of keys. Before Christ ascended into Heaven he endowed John with a special calling:

> Thou shalt tarry until I come in my glory, and shall prophesy before nations, kindreds, tongues and people . . . . . therefore, I will make him as flaming fire and a ministering angel; he shall minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation who dwell on the earth (D&C 7:3, 6; see also John 21:22–23).

John was to remain upon the Earth in person as a prophet of God, to "Prophecy before nations, kindreds, tongues and people" and to be a "ministering angel". His mission as an Elias was to be there in person to prepare and "gather the [ten lost] tribes of Israel".

In the 77th section of the Doctrine and Covenants additional information is given pertaining to an "Elias" who was to come and

restore all things. Presumably this verse also pertains to John the Revelator's mission:

> Question. What are we to understand by the angel ascending from the east, Revelation 7th chapter and 2nd verse? Answer. We are to understand that the angel ascending from the east is he to whom is given the seal of the living God over the twelve tribes of Israel; wherefore, he crieth unto the four angels having the everlasting gospel, saying: Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. And, if you will receive it, this is Elias which was to come to gather together the tribes of Israel and restore all things (D&C 77:9).

The Prophet Joseph Smith often made reference to the last dispensation, wherein all things were to be restored (*TPJS* 168, 171–73, 231; D&C 128:18). This restoration was to include all the basic doctrine, ordinances and Keys of the Priesthood which had existed in all previous dispensations (excepting the law of Moses *TPJS* 173). The question at hand is: "Who was to restore these keys?" Was it to be the last man on earth who held them, or was it to be the respective heads from each dispensation? The answer to this question is found in the history of the restoration. We have for example the restoration which took place on the Mount of Transfiguration in the New Testament. On this occasion Elijah appeared to Peter, James and John and gave them the Sealing Power of the Priesthood (Matt. 16:19, 17:1–5, 18:18), the same as he later did to Joseph and Oliver in the Kirtland Temple (D&C 110:13–16). If the last man who held the Keys was always to be the man who would restore them, why then was it Elijah instead of Peter, James and John who restored them to Joseph and Oliver. From the record which the Prophet has left us, we must conclude that the restoration was accomplished through the personal return and ministration of the different Patriarchs and Prophets from each dispensation respectively, and not particularly the last man on Earth who held the Keys. "Again what do we hear?" the Prophet queried the Saints, and then in answer to his own question he continued:

> the voice of Michael, the archangel; the voice of Gabriel, and of Raphael, and of divers angels, from Michael or Adam down to the present time, all declaring their dispensation, their rights, their keys, their honors, their

majesty and glory, and the power of their Priesthood; giving line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little, and there a little (D & C 128:21).

We know from the Prophet Joseph Smith's own statement that Noah, whom he identified as the angel Gabriel did return and restore keys, and we must conclude from the Prophet's statement that those keys pertained to his dispensation. This being the case there are no grounds to substantiate the supposition that John the Revelator would restore those same keys again, especially when those Keys pertained to a dispensation to which he did not belong.

John the Revelator was one of the three apostles (Peter, James and John) who bestowed upon Joseph the Apostolic Priesthood. The Lord described this occasion in the following words:

And also with Peter, and James, and John, whom I have sent unto you, by whom I have ordained you and confirmed you to be apostles, and especial witnesses of my name, and bear the keys of your ministry and of the same things which I revealed unto them (D&C 27:12).

It was at this time, in June of 1830, that John the Revelator committed to Joseph Smith the keys which pertained to his dispensation and ministry and not in the Kirtland Temple. John the Revelator's ministry was in the "dispensation of the Meridian of time" and the keys of his ministry pertained to that dispensation, and not to the "dispensation of Abraham". However this is not the case with Noah, he not only lived in Abraham's dispensation, but also established it. If we will review the scriptures it becomes evident which Elias appeared in the Kirtland Temple. John the Revelator's calling as an "Elias" "was a mission and an ordinance, for him to gather the tribes of Israel; behold, this is Elias, who, as it is written, must come and restore all things". However Noah's commission as an Elias is described in different terms. He was the "Elias, to whom I have committed the keys of bringing to pass the restoration of all things". It was "Keys" that Joseph received from Elias in the Kirtland Temple.

WHAT NOAH RESTORED

What then did Noah restore? What did the Keys to the "Gospel of the Dispensation of Abraham" consist of? As we have already seen, the Dispensation of Abraham was established under Noah and was based upon the same Priesthood, ordinances and Gospel plan that existed in the dispensations of Adam, Enoch and Noah. Those who will review the book of Genesis as given in the 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th chapters of the *Joseph Smith Translation,* will realize that the Patriarchs were in possession of the *Fulness of the Gospel of the Father*. They were an enlightened people who walked with God and talked with Him "face to face." Not only so, but they were also in possession of the blessings of the Church of the Firstborn. (J.S.T. Gen. 9:21–23; D & C 76:50–59, 67) President Heber C. Kimball set forth this doctrine in certain terms in a discourse which he delivered before the Saints on August 2nd, 1857. "Let me explain what the ***Church of the First Born*** is", he said and then in continuing he told the Saints that:

> It is the first Church that ever was raised up upon this Earth (Abraham 1:25-26); that is, the first born Church. That is what I mean; and when God our Father [i.e. Adam] organized that Church, He organized it just as His Father organized the Church on the Earth where He dwelt (*JD* 5:129)

The Book of Abraham reveals that a Patriarchal dispensation existed in Adam's day and also during Noah's:

> Now the first government of Egypt . . . was Patriarchal. Pharaoh, being a righteous man, established his kingdom and judged his people wisely and justly all his days, seeking earnestly to imitate that order established by the fathers in the first generations, in the days of the first Patriarchal reign, even in the reign of Adam, and also of Noah, his father (Abraham 1:25–26)

John Taylor also elaborated on the patriarchal order which existed in the early period of this earth's history:

> We find that after the days of Noah an order was introduced called the *Patriarchal Order*, *in which every man managed his own family affairs*,

and prominent men among them were *kings and priests* unto God, and officiated in what is known among us as the Priesthood of the Son of God, or the Priesthood after the Order of Melchisedec. Man began again to multiply on the face of the earth, and *the heads of families became their kings and priests, that is, the fathers of their own people*, and they were more or less under the influence and guidance of the Almighty. (*JD* 17:207)

The Prophet Joseph Smith had lofty thoughts regarding the Patriarchal Government which existed in Adam's day. In his Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar he wrote the following:

Hoeoophahphaheh: Patriarchal Government or authority; a land governed according to the pattern or order given to the patriarchs or fathers, rules and laws of a government administered by the direction of Heaven or God. A people living under the laws of the gospel: or that law by which they may be sanctified and see the face of God. A priestly government: a government administered by the authority of the priesthood less or under the patriarchal (Joseph Smith's Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar, published in *Doctrine of the Priesthood,* Vol. 5, No. 10, Oct. 1988)

The Dispensation of Abraham was a Patriarchal Dispensation, the same as that which existed in the days of Adam, Enoch, and Noah. All these dispensations were in possession of the Fulness of the "Father's" gospel, along with all the Laws, Doctrine, Ordinances and Organizations pertaining thereto (Alma 12:21–22, 29–37; 13:1–20). It was "the Holy Order of God", more commonly referred to as the "Holy Order", and those who were worthy were anointed "Kings and Priests" and thus given the higher Priesthood, to govern their own families in a Patriarchal government — a government which the Prophet Joseph Smith described as being "A Perfect Law of Theocracy" that stood "as God to give laws to the people" (*TPJS* 322).

It was this same order which Moses tried to establish after he had lead the Children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage. This is the essence of the Lord's promise to them as contained in the 19th chapter of Exodus:

Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the

earth is mind: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. (Exodus 19:5–6)

But rather than entering into this this covenant with the Lord, the children of Israel rejected the last law and apostatized, preferring the whoreish worship of heathen idolatry to that of the living God, and so the *Holy Order* and the ordinances thereof were taken out of Israel, and God cursed them with a carnal law. The Prophet Joseph Smith explained this in his August 27th, 1843 speech on Priesthood:

[The Prophet then] spoke concerning the Priesthood of Melchizedek, showing that the Sectarians never proposed to have it, [telling as he did so] an anecdote of the Episcopalian Priest, who said he had the Priesthood of Aaron but not [the Priesthood] of Melchizedek. [He then] bore this testimony, that [aside from those in this Church] "I never have found the man who claimed [to have] the Priesthood of Melchizedek.

[He then explained that] the Law [of Moses] was given under [the] Aaron[ic Priesthood] for the purpose of pouring out judgments and destructions — [the Aaronic Priesthood never did have the authority to bestow Celestial blessings and] consequently [even if the sectarians did have the Aaronic Priesthood they] never could save anyone and [they along with those that follow them will] all be damned together. . . . . .

[The Levitical Priesthood] was never able [nor was it intended by God, that it should] administer a blessing [to the people,] but [rather it was established] to bind heavy burdens [upon the Children of Israel] which neither they nor their fathers [were] able to bear. The Priesthood of Levi consisted of cursings and carnal commandments and not of blessings — and if the Priesthood of this generation has no more power than that of Levi or Aaron or of a Bishopric it administers no blessings but cursings, for it was an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth (Exodus 21:24; Heb. 7:11) . . . . . .

How shall God come to the rescue of this generation? He shall send Elijah [to reveal the Law of the Fulness of the Priesthood]. This [was the] Law [which was first] revealed to Moses in Horeb[, but it] never was revealed to the Children of Israel *as a nation*. [Because of their transgression, Moses destroyed the Tablets upon which the first law was written. The Lord did give a Second Law, but this was not according to the first, for the Lord commanded Moses saying:]

[I will take away the Priesthood out of their midst; therefore my Holy Order, and the Ordinances thereof, shall not go before them; for My presence shall not go up in their midst, lest I destroy them. But I will give unto them the law as at the first, but it shall be after the law of a carnal commandment; for I have sworn in My wrath, that they shall not enter into My presence, into My rest, in the days of their pilgrimage (JST Exodus 34:1–2)]. (A New Amalgamated Text of the Prophet's 27th August 1843 Discourse, to be published in a future issue of *Doctrine of the Priesthood*)

All the dispensations from Adam to Moses were Patriarchal. At that time, for the first time in the history of the world, the Father established a lesser order of things. The Prophet Joseph Smith explained:

When God offers a blessing or knowledge to a man, and he refuses to receive it, he will be damned — the Israelites pray[ed] that God would speak to Moses and not to them, in consequence of which He cursed them with a carnal law (Exodus 20:18–24). *God cursed the children of Israel because they would not receive* ***the last law*** *from Moses* — offerings, sacrifices and carnal commandments was added [to the Law] in consequence of Transgression and they that did them should live by them. (A New Amalgamated Text of the Prophet Joseph Smith's August 27th, 1843 discourse, to be published in a future issue of *Doctrine of the Priesthood*)

The following are some statements of Joseph Fielding Smith regarding these things:

"I want to say a few words about the Patriarchal Priesthood". "The Order of . . . priesthood which was established in the beginning was patriarchal. The authority descended from father to son". "All of the ancient patriarchs were high priests, but the direction of the Church in those days was by patriarchs." "Noah, who stands next to Adam in authority, brought this priesthood through the flood, and it continued from generation to generation. Abraham, the 10th from Noah, received special blessings from the Lord, and the priesthood continued through him and his seed."

"The patriarchal authority has come down from Abraham through Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Ephraim . . . . . All through the centuries from the beginning to the days of Moses, the patriarchal priesthood prevailed . . . . .

When the children of Israel — the descendants of Jacob, grandson of Abraham — were in the wilderness, after their deliverance from Egypt, the Lord offered them, on conditions that they would serve him, ***the fulness***

of this priesthood with all its blessings, and they would have become *a nation of priests under this* ***patriarchal order***.

However, the Children of Israel rebelled; they showed themselves unworthy of this great honor, and the Lord in his anger denied them ***this fulness of priesthood*** with all the rites that would prepare them for the exaltation in his presence." "That is, He ceased to ordain men and give them the divine authority as was intended in the beginning, when He said He would have a "**royal priesthood**", and He offered the priesthood to all the tribes of Israel; but they failed in the keeping of the commandments of the Lord, and in His anger, as you know, as recorded in the eighty-fourth section of the Doctrine and Covenants, He took Moses and the Higher priesthood out of their midst." "After the time of Moses, when the Melchizedek Priesthood was withdrawn from Israel, this order as it is called, of ***Patriarchal Priesthood***, did not continue." "We read from the statements of the Prophet Joseph Smith that all the prophets held the Melchizedek Priesthood and that evidently the Patriarchal Order of Priesthood; but that honor was confined to a few, a very few, and each one had to receive the special ordination . . . .

The ***Patriarchal Priesthood*** will be the priesthood that will be held by all those who are worthy of the ***exaltation in the celestial kingdom*** of God. For the whole plan of ***salvation and exaltation*** *is based upon the* ***Patriarchal Order***." (Joseph Fielding Smith, BYU, Devotional Speech, June 15, 1956; *Doctrines of Salvation* 3:160–61; 3:104)

In the New Testament the Apostle Peter speaks of a "***Royal Priesthood***":

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; (1st Peter 2:9)

This passage is expounded upon in Bruce R. McConkie's *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*:

Whenever the Lord has a people on earth he offers to make them a nation of *kings and priests* — not a congregation of lay members with a priest or a minister at the head — but a whole Church in which every man is his own minister, *in which every man stands as a king in his own right, reigning over his own family-kingdom. The priesthood which makes a man a king and a priest is thus a royal priesthood.*

To ancient Israel the offer was made in these words: "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure

unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." (Ex. 19:5–6) Peter is here telling the Meridian Saints that they have the same promise, and John records that some of them did in fact obtain this royal status and become ***kings*** *and* ***priests*** *. . .* (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* 3:294)

Beyond all question, Abraham's dispensation possessed an eternal Fulness of *The Father's Gospel*. It was in possession of a spiritual, priestly and civil government, all of which were bound together as one in a Patriarchal Government — a Government which was organized in accordance with the Perfect Law of a Celestial Theocracy and which stood "as God to give laws to the people" (*TPJS* 322). The ordinances of the Temple were the very hub of this Patriarchal Theocracy. Thus a Fulness of the Ordinances of the House of God, including the Endowment, Plural Marriage, Adoption, and the Second Anointing, together with the knowledge of God the Father — all these were embraced in the Gospel of the Dispensation of Abraham — all that is, excepting work for the dead. These were the ordinances and doctrine of the "Holy Order" and were referred to by the Prophet as the "Ancient Order of Things" and the "Order of the Ancient of Days" (*TPJS* 237). All of these principles, doctrines and ordinances formed an inherent part of "the Gospel of the Dispensation of Abraham" and consequently are commonly referred to as "the blessings of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." And all of these were restored by Elias or Noah in the Kirtland Temple, along with the Knowledge, Keys, Power, and Authority which was necessary in order to administer them in righteousness (D&C 128:21).

CONFERRAL OF THE BIRTHRIGHT

Following the bestowal of the Gospel of the Dispensation of Abraham, Noah then made an important declaration:

Saying that in us [i.e. Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery] and our seed, all generations after us should be blessed. (D&C 110:12)

In these words the two Presiding Patriarchal appointments were conferred upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, with the promise

that these two offices would descend upon their patriarchal heirs after them throughout all generations of time. Oliver's appointment was to the gentiles (D&C 18:19) and Joseph's was as presiding Patriarch to the chosen race or Israel.

At the time of the dedication of the Logan Temple, President John Taylor read this verse (D&C 110:12) to the people and expounded upon it:

> That was the promise made to Abraham some 3,500 years ago. It was not a promise made to Abraham alone, but through him to others. He and his seed were to be the instrumentality, and media through which mankind should be blessed; they were to be the special instruments in the hands of God for the accomplishment of these purposes. (*JD* 25:180)

John Taylor states that this promise was the same as that which Abraham received 3,500 years earlier. In the scriptures Abraham tells of receiving his appointment to this office:

> I sought for the blessings of the fathers, and the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same; having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring . . . to be a father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God, I became a rightful heir, *a High Priest*, ***holding the right belonging to the fathers.*** *It was conferred upon me from the fathers; it came down from the fathers, from the beginning of time, yea, even from the beginning*, ***or before the foundations of the earth*** down *to the present time*, even ***the right of the firstborn***, or ***the [right of the] first man***, *who is* ***Adam***, our ***first father***, *through the fathers unto me*. I sought for *mine appointment unto the Priesthood according to the appointment of God* ***unto the fathers concerning the seed***. (Abraham 1:2–4)

This is the record which Abraham gives of receiving "The Right of the Firstborn", a hereditary office which descends according to Patriarchal Law, from father to son.

THE RIGHT OF THE FIRSTBORN AND ITS MEANING

Many have supposed that this office always had to descend to the Firstborn son, however the scriptures do not vindicate this position. Seth was not Adam's firstborn son, neither was Shem the Firstborn

of his Father's house (Moses 8:12). Neither was Isaac, nor Jacob, nor Joseph nor Ephraim. It might more accurately be stated that all else being equal, the Firstborn son will inherit the birthright. However, it would appear from history that more often than not, all else is not equal, and consequently, at times, the second, third, fourth and so on son receives the birthright. This was the case with the Prophet Joseph Smith. On September 4th, 1873, President Young made the following statement:

> Brother Joseph Smith, instead of being the firstborn, was the third son of his father's family who came to maturity, yet he is actually the heir of the family; he is the heir of his father's house. It seems to us that the oldest son would be the natural heir; but we see that the Lord makes his own selection. (*JD* 16:187)

Part of the misconception about "The Right of the Firstborn" has come through misunderstanding the title. It has been supposed that it had reference to the firstborn son in a family, *when in fact it refers to* ***the Father of the family***. Abraham said that the Right of the Firstborn "came down from the fathers, from the beginning of time, yea, even from the beginning, or before the foundation of the earth to the present time, even ***the right of the firstborn***, *or the [right of the]* ***first man***, *who is* ***Adam***, *our* ***first father***, through the fathers unto me." According to the scriptures, Adam was "the Firstborn" to live on this creation:

> *And a genealogy was kept of the children of God. And this was the book of the generations of Adam,* saying: In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; In the image of his own body, male and female, created he them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam . . . . And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his own image, and called his name Seth. . . . Seth lived one hundred and five years, and begat Enos . . . . . And Enos lived ninety years, and begat Cainan. . . . And Cainan lived seventy years, and begat Mahalaleel . . . . . And Mahalaleel lived sixty-five years, and begat Jared . . . . . And Jared lived one hundred and sixty-two years, and begat Enoch . . . . . *And this is the genealogy of the sons of Adam,* ***who was the son of God,*** with whom God, himself, conversed. (Moses 6:8–22; see also Luke 3:38)

Adam was the first flesh upon this Earth, in fact he was born before he came to this Earth (Moses 3:7; 6:59). As ancient Jewish tradition expressed it: "Adam [was] the firstborn of the world" (*The Legends of the Jews* 1:332). *Adam did not inherit "The Right of the Firstborn",* **he was** "**the Firstborn**". It was his Patriarchal heirs, or those who were in the birthright line of his descendants who inherited "The Right of the Firstborn". Inherent in this Priesthood office was the right to stand as Father Adam to the human race, which is the same as to say "the right to stand as God to the people" (*TPJS* 322). The Prophet Joseph Smith clearly taught this doctrine in his writings on "the Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar." The following is a small sample of what can be found in its pages:

"Zub Zool Oan: *The first born, or the first man or father of fathers*" "Kiah broam: First reckoned in chronology — Coming down from the beginning *First born right* or blessings" "Ba eth ku: The next from Adam, one ordained under him, a patriarch or *the right of* the first born" "Ba eth Ki: The Third patriarch: or *right of* the first born" "Ba eth Ko: The fourth patriarch from Adam the *right* of first born" (Joseph Smith's Egyptian Alphabet & Grammar, *Doctrine of the Priesthood*, Vol. 5, No. 10, Oct. 1988)

It is important to realize the significance of these statements. Adam, because he was the Father and God of the whole human race, held certain Theocratic Powers in the Patriarchal Priesthood. Indeed, he was God to His own children and in Him were vested the Keys of the Priesthood through which his posterity would receive Celestial blessings. Being "The Firstborn" or Father and God of this creation, Adam established a birthright line, which according to Patriarchal Law was to descend down through his progeny from father to birthright son, until the end of time. It was through this office and birthright line that the Keys to the Family Kingdom of God the Father were to descend down to His worthy Heirs. The Scriptures refer to this presiding office in the birthright as "***the Right of the Firstborn***" which is to say, ***the right of the First man***, or *the right to stand as* ***Father Adam*** to the whole family of man. In other words, in Adam's absence, those who were in the foreordained line to inherit the birthright, would each in their own turn and time hold the right to stand in the place of ***Father Adam*** who was the ***First Man*** or the ***"Firstborn"***. Thus those who inherited

the birthright inherited *"**the right of the First man**"* or *"**the right of the Firstborn**"* and in this capacity they stood as the Presiding **Patriarch**, **Priest**, **King** *and* ***God*** to the world. Thus, those who inherit the Right of the Firstborn and receive the *Fulness of the Patriarchal Priesthood* stand "as God to give laws to the people, administering endless lives to the sons and daughters of Adam." (*TPJS* 322) It was this office that President Jedediah M. Grant referred to when he made the following statement:

> There can only be **one Adam**, and ***that is the ruling power*** — that man who holds *the keys of the kingdom of God on earth* — that man is ***the Adam*** *of the earth*, he is ***God's mouthpiece***, his presiding officer, and *the only man who has the legal right to preside*, and to turn *the* ***key of power***, *the key of* ***life*** *and* ***death***, and hold forth the ***sceptre*** of righteousness to the nations. (*Mormon Thunder — A Documentary History of Jedediah Morgan Grant* 174; I am indebted to Knute Knuteson for pointing this statement out to me).

President Young was referring to this same office when he told the Saints that:

> Joseph said to us, *"**I am a god to you**"* This was true and upon the same principles ***I am a God to this people*** and *so is any man* ***who is appointed to lead Israel or the Kingdom of God***. If the people reject him they reject the one who sent him. (*Wilford Woodruff's Journal* 1-27-60; Vol. 5:421)

The Prophet Joseph Smith explained the authority of this office in the "Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar":

> Phah eh: The first man, or Adam coming from Adam Keys or right over Patriarchal right by appointment." "Zool: from any or some fixed period of time back to the beginning of Creation, showing the chronology of the patriarchs, the right of priesthood, and the lineage through whom it shall be continued by promise . . ." "Zool: Signifying the lineage that lawfully hold the Keys of the Kingdom of God by promise" (Joseph Smith's Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar, *Doctrine of the Priesthood* Vol. 5, No. 10, Oct. 1988)

The Patriarchal descent of these keys is explained by Joseph Fielding Smith:

I glean these facts from Section 107 of the Doctrine and Covenants:

The first authority of Priesthood in the earth was Patriarchal. Adam was a patriarch, so were those who succeeded him. Being patriarchs, of course they were, *as stated by Alma,* **high priests *after the Holy Order***. This *patriarchal (or Evangelical) order of Priesthood* continued through the generations from Adam to Noah and from Noah to Moses. (*Way to Perfection* 72)

Joseph Fielding then proceeds to quote from Section 107, which gives the genealogical descent of the Right of the Firstborn as follows:

The order of this priesthood was confirmed to be handed down from father to son, and rightly belongs to the literal descendants of the chosen seed, to whom the promises were made. This order was instituted in the days of Adam, and came down by lineage in the following manner:

From Adam to Seth, who was ordained by Adam at the age of sixty-nine years, and was blessed by him three years previous to his (Adam's) death [i.e. he received his second anointing], and received the promise of God by his father, that his posterity should be the chosen of the Lord, and that they should be preserved unto the end of the earth . . . . Enos was ordained at the age of one hundred and thirty-four years and four months, by the hand of Adam. God called upon Cainan in the wilderness in the fortieth year of his age; and he met Adam in journeying to the place Shedolamak. He was eighty-seven years old when he received his ordination. Mahalaleel was four hundred and ninety-six years and seven days old when he was ordained by the hand of Adam, who also blessed him. Jared was two hundred years old when he was ordained under the hand of Adam, who also blessed him. Enoch was twenty-five years old when he was ordained under the hand of Adam; and he was sixty-five and Adam blessed him. And he saw the Lord, and he walked with him, and was before his face continually; and he walked with God three hundred and sixty-five years, making him four hundred and thirty years old when he was translated. Methuselah was one hundred years old when he was ordained under the hand of Adam. Lamech was thirty-two years old when he was ordained under the hand of Seth. Noah was ten years old when he was ordained under the hand of Methuselah. (D&C 107:40–52)

In accordance with the book of Genesis, the "Right of the Firstborn" was passed on down from Noah to Shem, who was one of

his sons. The Old Testament consistently represents Shem to be the oldest of Noah's three mentioned sons (Gen 5:32; 1 Chr 1:4), with Japheth sometimes being represented as Noah's Second son (*The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* 2:802; *Zondervan's Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* 3:405) and sometimes as his third (Gen 6:10; 7:13; 9:18; 10;1. In like manner, Ham is also represented, sometimes as Noah's second son, and sometimes as his third son (Gen 9:22, 24). However, we learn through a revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith, in February of 1831, that Japheth was actually the eldest of the three, and that Shem was the second son and Ham the youngest. It is even suggested that Ham was not born of the same mother that Japheth and Shem were:

> And Noah was four hundred and fifty years old, and begat Japheth; and forty-two years afterward he begat Shem of her who was the mother of Japheth, and when he was five hundred years old be begat Ham. (Moses 8:12; see also Gen 10:21; *Encyclopedia Judaica* 9:1285)

The account of Shem's having received the birthright and a sketchy story telling of an incident involved with it, is given in Genesis. Apparently Ham broke the rules of Hebrew etiquette by looking upon his naked father as he lay in a drunken stupor. In doing this, Ham insulted his father's dignity and for this he was cursed, but Shem and Japeth went backwards and covered their father's nakedness, and for this were blessed:

> And the sons of Noah, that went forth of the ark, were Shem, and Ham, and Japheth: and Ham is the father of Canaan. These are the three sons of Noah: and of them was the whole earth overspread. And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without. And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, ***Blessed be the Lord God of Shem***; and

Canaan shall be his servant. *God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell **in the tents of Shem***; and Canaan shall be his servant. (Gen. 9:18–27)

The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible suggests that the story as given above is not complete:

The story does not make clear why Noah should curse Canaan. Various explanations have been given, one of the most likely being that Canaan had done something not mentioned in the story which deserved cursing. (*ZPEB* 3:21)

Shem was Melchizedek

As stated above, the birthright went from Noah to his second son Shem, who is identified in many places as Melchizedek. In the December 15th, 1844 issue of the *Times and Seasons* , Apostle John Taylor stated that Melchizedek was Shem:

And with the superior knowledge of men like Noah, *Shem (who was Melchizedek)* and Abraham, the father of the faithful, three contemporaries, *holding the keys of the highest order of the priesthood* (*T&S* 5:746)

Some have felt that the possibility that Melchizedek might have been Shem is precluded in the 84th Section of the Doctrine and Covenants. In this revelation, the genealogy of the Priesthood which Moses received from his father-in-law Jethro, is traced down through Melchizedek and his fathers back to Adam. The Revelation reads as follows:

Which Abraham received the priesthood from Melchizedek, who received it through the lineage of his fathers, even till Noah (D&C 84:14)

Those who have used this passage as an argument against the sentiments expressed by John Taylor have misunderstood — they have interpreted the words "through the lineage of his fathers" as an allusion to a line of fathers between Noah and Melchizedek. If this were the case, it would rule out the possibility of Melchizedek being Shem, because Shem was the direct son of Noah. However a closer reading of this passage as well as the verse which follows it will reveal that this interpretation is out of context. The words

"through the lineage of his fathers" makes reference to the line of Melchizedek's fathers from Adam till Noah, rather than between Noah and Melchizedek. That this is the case is confirmed by the verse which follows it, as it uses the same pattern of reasoning with regard to Noah and Enoch: "And from Noah till Enoch, through the lineage of ***their*** fathers" (D&C 84:15). Notice that it says "Through the lineage of ***their*** fathers" which could only refer to ***their*** fathers from Adam to Enoch, as Enoch's posterity are not his fathers. That Melchizedek is Shem is again affirmed by President Joseph F. Smith in his vision of the Redemption of the Dead:

> Among the great and mighty ones who were assembled in this vast congregation of the righteous were . . . . . Noah, who gave warning of the flood; *Shem, the great high priest*; Abraham, the father of the faithful . . . (D&C 138:38, 41; *UPR* 90:38, 41)

Jewish legend also identifies Melchizedek as Shem. Alvin R. Dyer in his book *The Lord Speaketh* (290–91) adds the following testimony:

> Of passing interest, and only because it sustains the strong probability that *Shem* and *Melchizedek* are one and the same person, as suggested in the information already presented, reference is made to the legendary writings of S. Baring Gould, M.A. concerning Melchizedek.
>
> Of Shem the Rabbis have somewhat to say, I have found in the Midrash (Midrash, i.e. Jewish interpretation of the Scriptures, mainly Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy. It means to search to probe.) that the Rabbi Johanan, son of Nuri, said: 'The Holy, ever-blessed God took Shem, son of Noah, and consecrated him priest of the Most High, that he should minister before Him: and He let his Majesty dwell with Him, and He gave him the name Melchizedek, a priest of the Most High God, King of Salem. His brother Japeth learnt the law of him in his school, till Abraham came, who learnt it in the school of Shem. For this Abraham obtained, praying to God that his Majesty should remain and dwell in the house of Shem wherefore it is said of him; Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. . . . .' (Gould, *Legends of the Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 140f; Source: Eisenmenger pp. 318f, 376)
>
> "According to Jewish traditions, Shem, the son of Noah, is Melchizedek, consecrated to be a priest forever, and who set up a Kingdom in Salem

which anciently was known also as Zedek. The Tarquinism, or paraphrases of the Sacred Text, distinctly say 'Melchizedek, who was Shem, son of Noah, King of Jerusalem'" (Etheridge 1, p. 199)

Joseph Ben-Garian writes:

O Jerusalem! once the city of the great King, by what name shall I designate thee? Anciently thou wast called Jebus, after thy founder; then thou didst acquire the name of Zedek, and from thence did thy King Jehoram take his title *Melchi-zedek* (or Melch-Zedek, Lord of Zedek), for he was a just king, and he reigned in thee justly. And thou didst obtain the name of Justice, and in thee Justice dwelt, and the star that did illumine thee; thou wast called Zedek, and in the same King's reign, to thee was given the title Salem, as it is written in the law: and Melchizedek was King of Salem, so called because thus the measure of iniquity of the people was accomplished. But Abraham, our father, of pious memory, chose thee, to labor in thee to lay a root of good works, and because the majesty of God dwelt in thee, when Abraham, our father flourished.' (Georgius Cedrenus, Ed. Habbe, Paris, 1660, p.135) (*The Lord Speaketh*, 290–291)

Speaking of Melchizedek, the *Encyclopedia Judaica* tells us that in several places in rabbinical literature, "Melchizedek is stated to be a descendant of Noah, and is even identified with Shem the son of Noah." (*Encyclopedia Judaica* 11:1289) *The Jewish Encyclopedia* also Speaks of the "rabbis of later generations" who "identified Melchizedek with Shem, the ancestor of Abraham" (*The Jewish Encyclopedia* 8:450)

As we have already seen, the "Right of the Firstborn" was passed down from Noah to Shem (Gen 9:18—27) who was Melchizedek and finally it was given to Abraham of whom we have already read. We learn from both the Bible and the book of Abraham that some of Abraham's forefathers had turned away from the worship of the true God. For this reason the birthright bypassed them — or should we say they were skipped, and the "Right of the Firstborn" was conveyed to Abraham. The book of Genesis tells us that the birthright passed down from Abraham to his son Isaac (Gen. 17:19), and finally to Jacob or Israel (Gen 48:3–4; Exodus 4:22), who gave it to his son Joseph (Gen 49:22–26) and finally to his grandson Ephraim (Gen 48:13–20; Jer 31:9). At this point the knowledge of

the birthright is lost, however, the 133rd Section of the Doctrine and Covenants tells us that in the last days the other tribes of Israel will receive their Priesthood blessings from under the hands of the children of Ephraim (D&C 133:32). It is probable that Elijah the Tishbite was an Ephraimite. But in any case, in the Meridian of Time, Paul claimed that Jesus who was declared to be the direct son of God, received the Birthright. Finally in our dispensation, it was given to the Prophet Joseph Smith (D&C 110:12; 124: 56–58; 132:30), who according to revelation is a descendant of Jesus Christ and as such partly a descendant of Jesse, and also of Ephraim (D&C 113). Because of the apostasy of Joseph's children through Emma, they were bypassed, and the birthright was passed to Alma Dayer LeBaron, who according to the law of the Priesthood was a son of the Prophet Joseph Smith by the New and Everlasting Covenant of Marriage. (*Doctrine of the Priesthood,* Vol. 7, No. 9; Vol. 7, No. 5, p. 19) There is an immense sum of information about the material contained in this last paragraph, but if it is not passed over for another time, the foregoing material will not be published for a good while yet to come, so we will let this suffice for the present. (*To be continued*)

APPENDIX

The following interesting information is taken from Ginzberg's *"The Legends of the Jews"*. It will be readily apparent that there are some contradictions in the material which is presented below and that the understanding of the "Right of the Firstborn" is not in all respects the same as that which was taught by the Prophet Joseph Smith. Nevertheless, it is likely that the Prophet saw at least some of this material and that in one way or another it left an impression on his ever searching and enquiring mind.

It is hoped that my purpose in publishing what follows will not be misunderstood. I do not publish it in the belief that it is in all respects accurate — but rather, because it affords us an opportunity to gain some insight regarding the birthright as it has been understood in late Jewish and Hebrew literature. It should be remembered, that all of what follows was written centuries after Israel had lost the knowledge of the Higher Law, and after they had been cursed with the carnal law of Moses — consequently it is only to be expected that their thinking would not reflect an understanding of the "Perfect Law of a Celestial Theocracy" which the Prophet Joseph Smith established at Nauvoo. Nevertheless, they did inherit certain traditions from the Patriarchs, and what follows clearly indicates that portion which has been preserved:

From the creation of the world until after the deluge the unwritten law had been in force, that the first-born son of the patriarchs was to be the ruler of the world. Thus, Seth was the successor to Adam, and he was followed in turn by Enosh, and so the succession went on, from first-born son to first-born son, down to Noah and his oldest son Shem. Now, the first-born son of Shem was Elam, and, according to custom, he should have been given the universal dominion which was his heritage. Shem, being a prophet, knew that Abraham and his posterity, the Israelites, would not spring from the family of Elam, but from that of Arpachshad. Therefore he named Arpachshad as his successor, and through him rulership descended to Abraham, and so to Isaac, Jacob, and Judah, and to David and his

posterity, down to the last Judean king Zedekiah, who was deprived of his sovereignty by Nebuchadnezzar. (The Legends of the Jews 4:368–369)

When Isaac grew up, quarrels broke out between him and Ishmael, on account of the rights of the first-born. Ishmael insisted he should receive a double portion of the inheritance after the death of Abraham, and Isaac should receive only one portion. Ishmael, who had been accustomed from his youth to use the bow and arrow, was in the habit of aiming his missiles in the direction of Isaac, saying at the same time that he was but jesting. (*The Legends of the Jews* 1:263–264)

Rebekah was more clear-sighted. She knew her sons as they really were, and therefore her love for Jacob was exceeding great. The oftener she heard his voice, the deeper grew her affection for him. Abraham agreed with her. He also loved his grandson Jacob, for he knew that in him his name and his seed would be called. And he said unto Rebekah, "My daughter, watch over my son Jacob, for he shall be in my stead on the earth and for a blessing in the midst of the children of men, and for the glory of the whole seed of Shem." Having admonished Rebekah thus to keep guard over Jacob, who was destined to be the bearer of the blessing given to Abraham by God, he called for his grandson, and in the presence of Rebekah he blessed him, and said: "Jacob, my beloved son, whom my soul loveth, may God bless thee from above the firmament, and may He give thee all the blessing wherewith He blessed Adam, and Enoch, and Noah, and Shem, and all the things of which He told me, and all the things which He promised to give me may He cause to cleave to thee and to thy seed forever, according to the days of the heavens above the earth. And the spirit of Mastema shall not rule over thee or over thy seed, to turn thee from the lord, who is thy God from henceforth and forever. And may the Lord God be a father to thee, and mayest thou be His first-born son, and may He be a father to thy people always. Go in peace, my son. (*The Legends of the Jews* 1:316–318)

Jacob [talking to Esau said]: "If thou art of opinion that there is no future world, and that the dead do not rise to new lie, then why dost thou want thy birthright? Sell it to me, now, while it is yet possible to do so. Once the Torah is revealed, it cannot be done. Verily, there is a future world, in which the righteous receive their reward. I tell thee this, lest thou say later I deceived thee."

Jacob was little concerned about the double share of the inheritance that went with the birthright. What he thought of was the priestly service, which was the prerogative of the first-born in ancient times, and Jacob was loth to have his impious brother Esau play the priest, he who despised all Divine service. (*The Legends of the Jews* 1:320; see also 3:93)

Jacob's hesitation was not yet removed. His father, he feared, would touch him and convince himself that he was not hairy, and therefore not his son Esau. Accordingly, Rebekah tore the skins of the two kids into strips and sewed them together, for Jacob was so tall a giant that otherwise they would not have sufficed to cover his hands. To make Jacob's disguise complete, Rebekah felt justified in putting Esau's wonderful garments on him. They were the high-priestly raiment in which God had clothed Adam, "the first-born of the world," for in the days before the erection of the Tabernacle all the first-born males officiated as priests. From Adam these garments descended to Noah, who transmitted them to Shem, and Shem bequeathed them to Abraham, and Abraham to his son Isaac, from whom they reached Esau as the older of his two sons. It was the opinion of Rebekah that as Jacob had bought the birthright from his brother, he had thereby come into possession of the garments as well. (The Legends of the Jews 1:332)

Esau [said to his father Isaac]: "To me Jacob gave no more than a dish of lentils, and in payment for it he took my birthright. What must he have taken from thee for flesh of animals?" Hitherto Isaac had been in great anguish on account of the thought that he had committed a wrong in giving his blessing to his younger son instead of the first-born, to whom it belonged by law and custom. But when

he heard that Jacob had acquired the birthright from Esau, he said, "I gave my blessing to the right one!"

In his dismay, Isaac had had the intention of cursing Jacob for having wrested the blessing from him through cunning. God prevented him from carrying out his plan. He reminded him that he would but curse himself, seeing that his blessing contained the words, "Cursed be every one that curseth thee." But Isaac was not willing to acknowledge his blessing valid as applied to Jacob, until he was informed that his second son was the possessor of the birthright. Only then did he say, "Yea, he shall be blessed," whereat Esau cried with an exceeding great and bitter cry. (*The Legends of the Jews* 1:337–338)

Moses did not himself set out to battle against this dangerous foe of Israel, but he sent his servant Joshua, and for good reasons. Moses knew that only a descendant of Rachel, like the Ephraimite Joshua, could conquer the descendant of Esau. All the sons of Jacob had taken part in the unbrotherly act of selling Joseph as a slave, hence none of their descendants might stand up in battle against the descendant of Esau; for they who had themselves acted unnaturally to a brother, could hardly hope for God's assistance in a struggle with the unbrotherly Edomites. Only the descendants of Joseph, the man who had been generous and good to his brothers, might hope that God would grant them aid against the unbrotherly descendants of Esau. In many other respects, too, Joseph was the opposite of Esau, and his services stood his descendants in good stead in their battles against the descendants of Esau. Esau was the firstborn of his father, but through his evil deeds he lost his birthright; Joseph, on the other hand, was the youngest of his father's sons, and through his good deeds was he found worthy of enjoying the rights of a firstborn son. (*The Legends of the Jews* 3:57–58)

As an atonement for the twenty pieces of silver taken by his brethren in exchange for Joseph, God commanded that every firstborn son shall be redeemed by the priest with an equal amount, and, also, every Israelite must pay annually to the sanctuary as much as

fell to each of the brethren as his share of the price. (*The Legends of the Jews* 2:18)

The second law revealed on this day was the separation of the Levites from among the children of Israel, that they might be dedicated to the sanctuary. "For God elevates no man to an office unless He has tried him and found him worthy of his calling." He did not say, "and the Levites shall be Mine," before He had tried this tribe, and found them worthy. In Egypt none but the tribe of Levi observed the Torah and clung to the token of the Abrahamic covenant, while the other tribes, abandoning both Torah and token of covenant, like the Egyptians, practiced idolatry. In the desert, also, it was this tribe alone that did not take part in the worship of the Golden Calf. Justly, therefore, did God's choice fall upon this godly tribe, who on this day were consecrated as the servants of God and His sanctuary.

The ceremonies connected with the consecration of the Levites had much in common with the regulations for the cleansing of lepers. Originally, the firstborn had been the servants of the sanctuary, but, owing to the worship of the Golden Calf, they lost this prerogative, and the Levites replaced them. (*The Legends of the Jews* 3:210–211)

In the choice of this tribe God showed His preference for the seventh, for Levi was the seventh pious man, starting from Adam, to wit: Adam, Noah, Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Levi. As in this instance, so in many others did God indicate His love for the seventh. He sits enthroned in the seventh heaven; of the seven worlds the seventh alone is inhabited by human beings; of the early generations the seventh was the most excellent, for it produced Enoch. Moses, seventh among the Patriarchs, was judged worthy of receiving the Torah. David, seventh sons of Jesse, was chosen as king. In periods of time, also, the seventh was the favorite. The seventh day is the Sabbath; the seventh month, Tishri, is the month of the holy days; the seventh year is the Sabbatical year of rest, and every seventh Sabbatical year of rest is the year of jubilee.

Another reason for numbering even the youngest boys among the Levites was that the tribe of Levi as a whole had the responsibility of atoning for the sin of the first-born among the children of Israel. For it was these who until the time of the worship of the Golden Calf performed the services of the priesthood, and their privilege was taken from them owing to this, their sin. This prerogative was then conferred upon the tribe of Levi, who, moreover, dedicating themselves, man for man, to the service of the Lord, served as an atonement for the first-born of Israel, that they might not be destroyed as they deserved.

The exchange of Levites in place of the first-born did, however, present a difficulty. For God had communicated the number of Levites to Moses in the following way: "Their number amounts to as many as the number of My legion." For, when God came down upon Sinai, twenty-two thousand angels surrounded Him, and just as many men did the Levites number. Outside of these there were three hundred first-born among the Levites that could not well be offered in exchange for the first-born among the other tribes, because their standing was the same as theirs. As the number of first-born among the other tribes exceeded the number of Levites by two hundred seventy-three, this surplus remained without actual atonement. Hence God ordered Moses to take from them five shekels apiece by the poll as redemption money, and give it to the priests. This sum was fixed upon by God, who said: "Ye sold the first-born of Rachel for five shekels, and for this reason shall ye give as redemption money for every first-born among ye five shekels." (*The Legends of the Jews 3:226–227)*

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